



## Food and Housing Security: 2000-2001

Marieka M. Klawitter & Dawn Griffey  
Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs  
University of Washington

April 2002

This report describes data from the WorkFirst Study (WFS). The sample was drawn from the statewide list of adults receiving welfare assistance in March 1999 (1999 cohort) and October 2000 (2000 cohort). The 1999 cohort respondents were interviewed in 2000 and again in early 2001. The 2000 cohort respondents were interviewed in early 2001. This report uses survey data from 3,037 interviews in the first year, the 1,955 re-interviews with the 1999 cohort, and from 1,334 interviews with the 2000 cohort.

The report describes data from the 2001 survey on the food and housing security of the respondents, comparing responses from the 1999 and 2000 cohorts. For comparison, we also use data from a Washington State survey of families who had left TANF (1999) and the 1999 National Survey of American Families (for Washington and the nation).<sup>1</sup>

### FINDINGS

---

- Respondents in the 2000 Cohort were more likely to have experienced food or housing insecurity in the last year than were respondents in the 1999 Cohort. However, the 2000 Cohort respondents were less likely to have experienced housing insecurity in the last month. These differences may be due to the timing of TANF receipt for respondents in the two cohorts.
- Twenty percent of the 1999 Cohort respondents and 29 percent of the 2000 Cohort respondents reported eating less than they should due to lack of money in the last month. Around 14 percent of each cohort reported that their children ate less than they should in the last month.
- Five percent of the 1999 cohort and 7 percent of the 2000 Cohort reported losing their housing in the last year due to their inability to pay rent, mortgage, or utilities.
- About half of the respondents who reported losing their housing moved in with others, while only a very small number reported moving into a shelter or becoming homeless.

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) is a multi-year study which looks at the well-being of the nation's families as a whole and in 13 states. The survey oversampled low-income families.

**FIGURE 1: COMPARISON OF FOOD SECURITY INDICATORS**

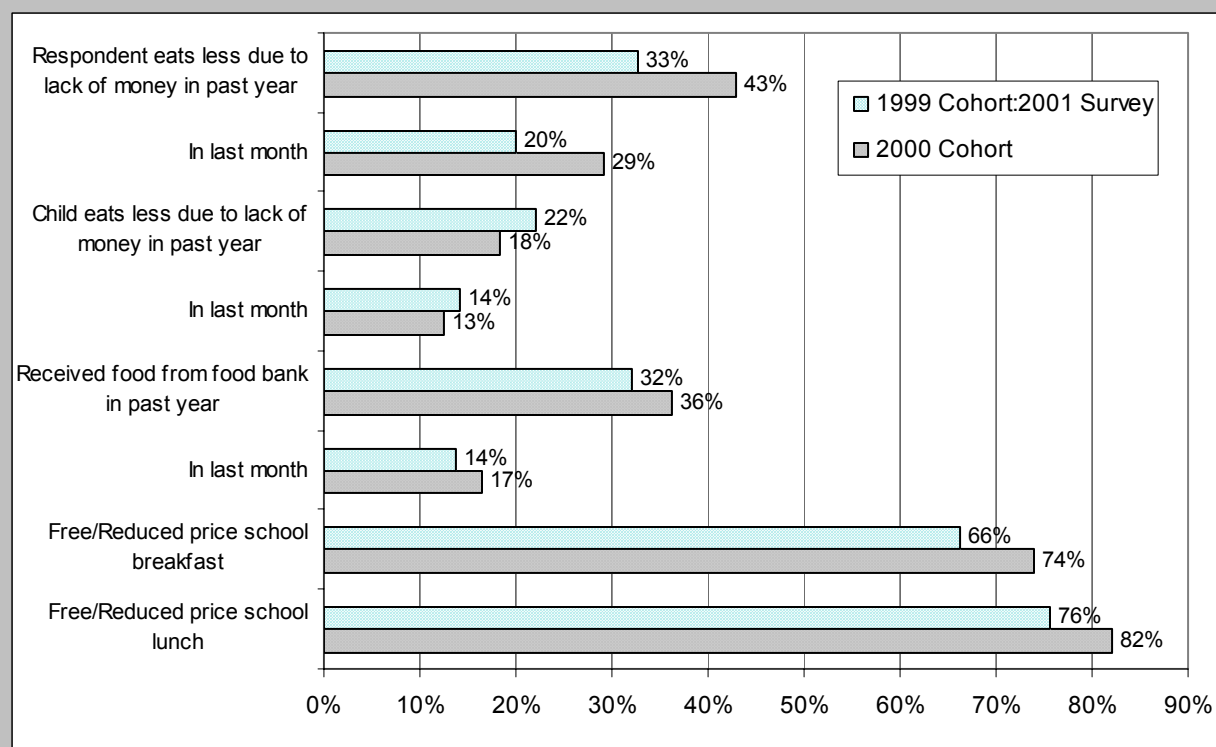


Figure 1 shows food security indicators from the 2001 survey for the 1999 and 2000 Cohorts. A third of the 1999 respondents and 43 percent of the 2000 Cohort respondents reported eating less than they should due to lack of money at some point in the past year. In comparison, 30 percent of respondents in the 1999 TANF exit survey (survey of clients who left TANF) reported eating less due to money in the past six months. Respondents in 2000 Cohort were also more likely to have eaten less due to lack of money in the past month (29 percent) than were 1999 Cohort respondents (20 percent). About 20 of respondents reported that their child had eaten less than he or she should have due to lack of money at some point in the past year. Fourteen percent of 1999 Cohort respondents reported this occurring in the last month, as did 13 percent of 2000 Cohort respondents.

About a third of respondents received food from a food bank or soup kitchen sometime in the past year, with the 2000 Cohort reporting slightly higher rates of use (36 percent). A little over a third of respondents in the TANF exit survey also reported using a food bank in the past six months. Fourteen percent of the 1999 Cohort and 17 percent of 2000 Cohort respondents used an emergency food program in the last month. In addition, the majority of respondents reported that their children participated in free or reduced price school breakfast programs (66 percent for 1999 Cohort and 74 percent of 2000 Cohort) or free/reduced price school lunch programs (76 percent of 1999 Cohort group and 82 percent of 2000 Cohort).

Some of the differences between the 1999 Cohort respondents and the 2000 Cohort respondents could be attributable to the fact that respondents in the two cohorts are at different time points in

<sup>2</sup> Group differences discussed were significant at the 5% level.

the lifecycle of their welfare experience. Data from re-interviews in 2002 with these groups will allow us to assess the contribution of cohort characteristics, changing policy or economic conditions, and typical lifecycle changes over time for families.

**FIGURE 2:  
PERCENTAGE OF  
ADULTS  
REPORTING EATING  
LESS DUE TO LACK  
OF MONEY IN  
PAST YEAR<sup>3</sup>**

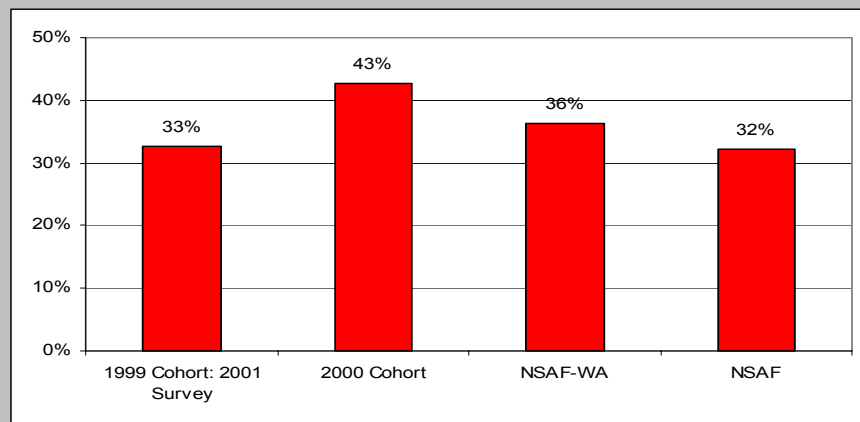
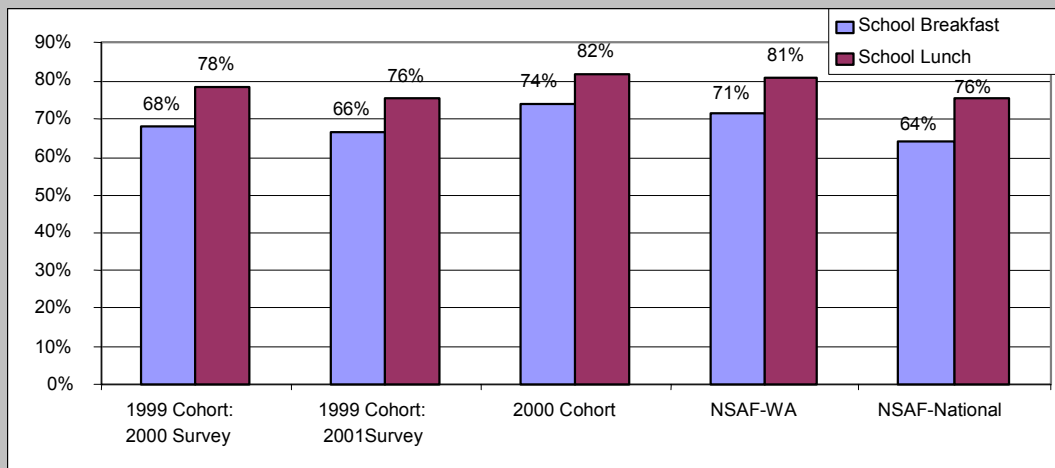


Figure 2 compares the percentage of respondents who reported eating less due to lack of money sometime in the past year to 1999 National Survey of American Family (NSAF) respondents who had been on welfare sometime since 1997. About a third of respondents in 1999 Cohort, NSAF-Washington State and NSAF-national reported eating less due to lack of money. A significantly higher percentage (43 percent) of the 2000 Cohort adult respondents reported this same type of food insecurity.

**FIGURE 3: USE OF FREE/REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL BREAKFAST OR LUNCH**

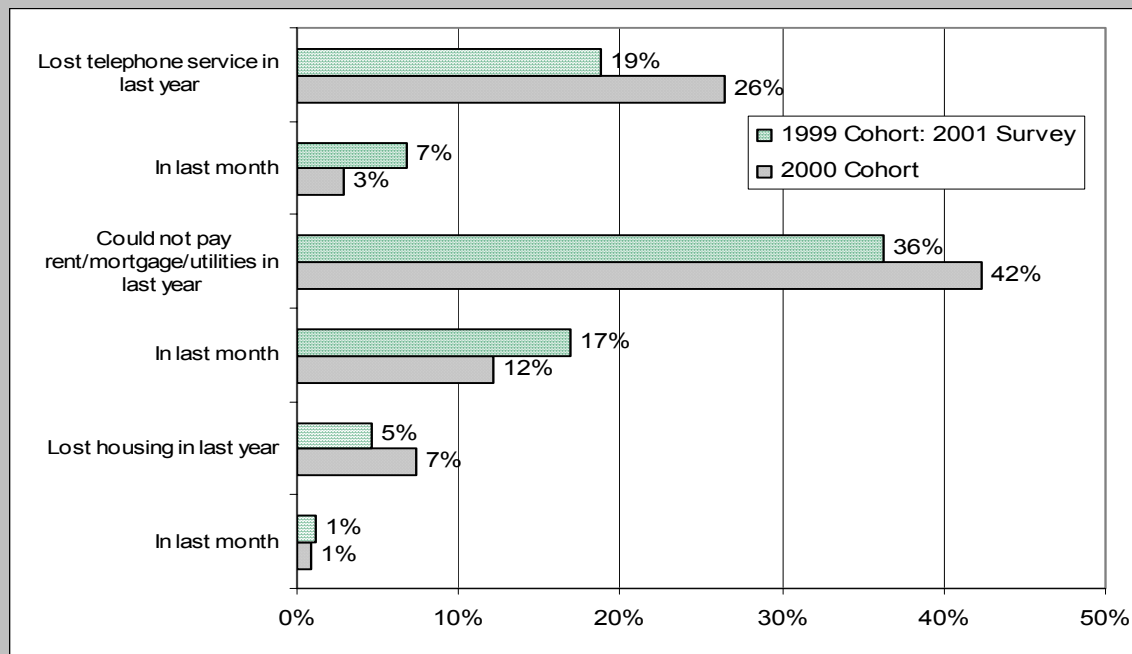


The percentage of respondents reporting that their children used free or reduced price school breakfast and lunch programs is fairly consistent among the WorkFirst surveys and the NSAF. Rates of use of school lunches and breakfasts were similar for the 2000 Cohort and the NSAF sample from Washington State, and slightly lower for the 1999 Cohort in both the 2000 and 2001 surveys. Use of school lunches and breakfasts were higher in Washington than in the National NSAF sample.

<sup>3</sup> We looked only at respondents in the NSAF study who had received AFDC/TANF sometime since 1997.

## Housing and Utility Security

**FIGURE 4: COMPARISON OF HOUSING SECURITY INDICATORS**



More respondents in the 2000 Cohort lost telephone service in the past year (26 percent), could not pay their rent, mortgage, or utility bills at some point in the past year (42 percent) or lost housing in the past year (7 percent) than did 1999 Cohort respondents. However, respondents in the 2000 Cohort were less likely to have experienced these events in the past month (with the exception of loss of housing). Rates of housing loss in the WFS were probably lower than those found in the 1999 Exit Survey which reported that 7 percent of families lost housing in the previous 6 months.

**FIGURE 5: WORKFIRST RESPONDENTS REPORTING INABILITY TO PAY RENT, MORTGAGE OR UTILITIES IN LAST YEAR**

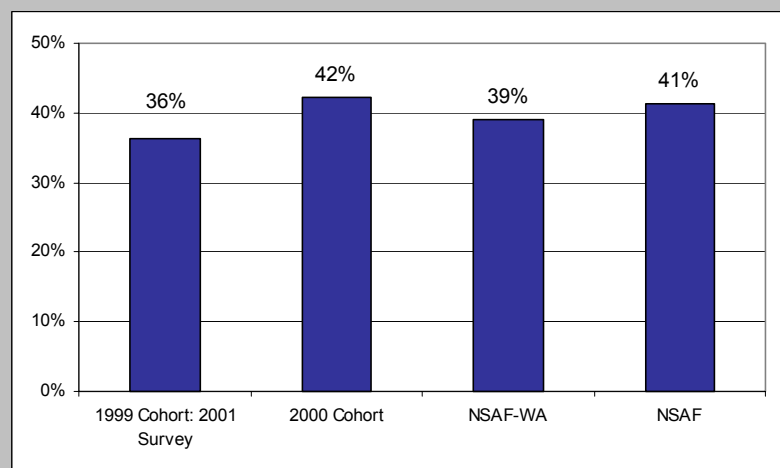


Figure 5 shows the percentage of respondents who reported an inability to pay their rent, mortgage, or utilities sometime within the last year. The 2000 Cohort had the highest percentage at 42 percent, while 1999 Cohort had the lowest reported percentage at 36 percent. NSAF results for Washington State and nationwide were around 40 percent.

**FIGURE 6:  
NEW HOUSING FOR  
THOSE REPORTING A  
LOSS OF HOUSING**

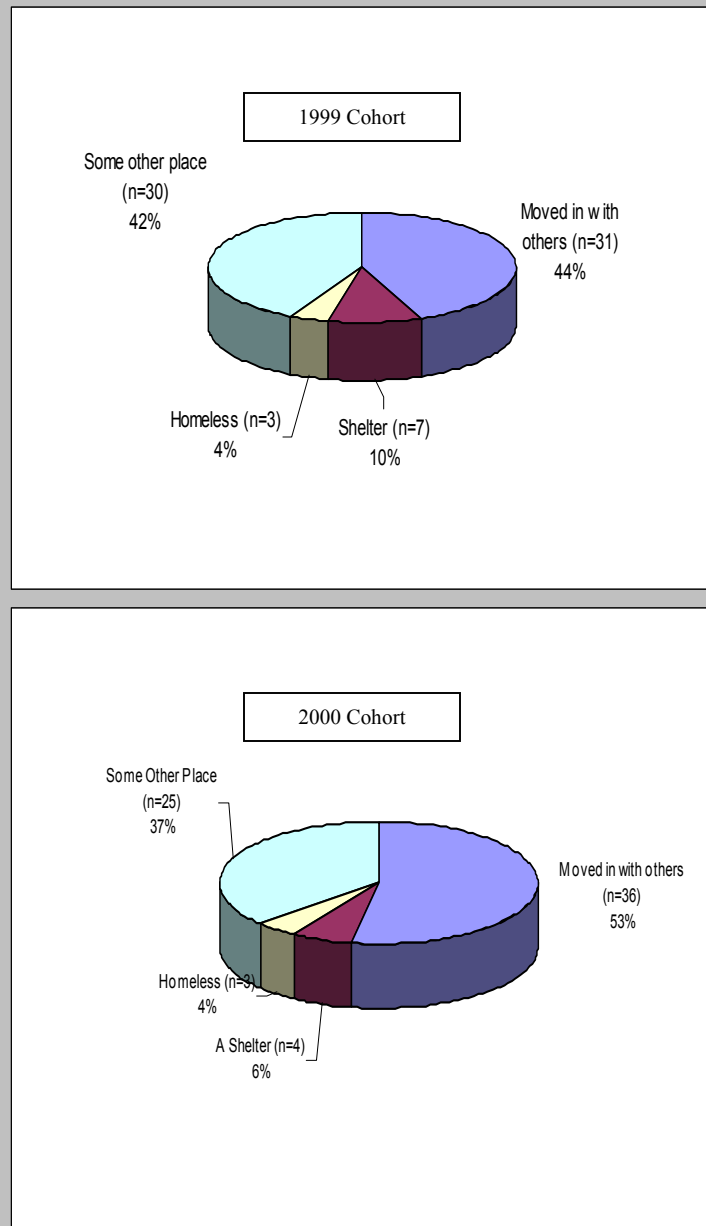


Figure 6 shows the type of housing respondents moved to for those who reported a loss of housing in the past year. The most common response of those who lost housing was to move in with others (44 percent for 1999 Cohort and 53 percent for 2000 Cohort). A very small number of people reported moving into a shelter or becoming homeless.